

Dear Minister Burke,

I am writing as a worker in the book publishing industry to urge the government to include meaningful support for local bookshops in the new National Cultural Policy.

Independent bookshops are the backbone of the Australian Publishing Industry, and they are in jeopardy. They are the champions of local, Australian authors, connecting them and their books with local communities. Independent bookshops are constantly hosting book launch events, Q&A's on important topics, book signings, book clubs, poetry readings, and so much more. They are so often the platform by which our Australian writing is shared with the country and amplified to readers.

Independent bookshops are particularly vital in championing First Nations and underrepresented authors and stories that would otherwise not find their audience amongst the sea of imported American and UK books that dominate the shelves of the major department store chains like Big W, Kmart and Target.

Local bookshops are not merely retail businesses. They are cultural infrastructure - community gathering places where Australian stories are discovered, where children fall in love with reading, and where literary careers begin. Yet every year bookshops close, undermined by online giants and discount chains that sell books at 40–50% below recommended retail price.

Too many times in recent months, I have contacted an independent bookstore to arrange an event, offer author signings, or call to check-in, and have been told they are closing down due to financial strain. Each time I strike a bookstore off our contacts, I feel the loss to their community, local aspiring writers and bookselling staff. It is an alarming trend.

Australia lags behind comparable countries in protecting its book retail sector. France, Italy, the UK, Germany, and more have introduced proven measures - discount caps, tax offsets, and rates relief - that have stabilised their independent bookshop sectors. Australia should do the same.

I support the Australian Booksellers Association's call to:

- Fund establishment of a skills training and certification program development and delivery to professionalise the industry, creating recognised career pathways.
- Establish an Australian Independent Bookshop Tax Offset (AIBTO): a refundable tax rebate on core operating expenses including wages, rent, and purchases of Australian-authored titles.
- Examine the feasibility of restrictions on deep discounting of new-release Australian titles, aligned with established European models. April 2026
- Investigate the case for GST reduction or exemption on books, consistent with international precedent.
- Invest in refreshing legacy data systems across the Australian book supply chain.
- Support an Australian Book Voucher Program, redeemable at local bookshops nationwide.
- Fund ongoing grants to support bookshop event delivery including author events, book clubs, workshops, story times, and other community programs.

Australian publishing houses, like the press where I work, can only continue to publish and amplify Australian talent when our independent bookstores are adequately supported. The Australian people deserve to read Australian books and have access to the local community hubs that make it all happen.

I urge the government to act. Local bookshops are irreplaceable - but without support, more will close. The measures proposed by the ABA are modest, internationally proven, and would deliver significant cultural and economic returns.

Kind regards,

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